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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER YANG JIECHI HOLDS NPC PRESS CONFERENCE
MARCH 7

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SUMMARY

[1](#)1. Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi outlined China's foreign policy priorities in a March 7 press conference held on the margins of the ongoing National People's Congress (NPC). U.S.-China relations are "off to a good start" under the new Obama administration, Yang said, noting there currently is an "even greater range of common interests" between the two sides. In addition to stressing the importance of working with other countries to overcome the global financial crisis, Yang emphasized the need for China's diplomacy to support its economic development and protect the interests of Chinese citizens and businesses overseas. Regarding Tibet, Yang reacted defensively to a question about Beijing's cancellation of the China-Europe summit following French President Sarkozy's meeting with the Dalai Lama, who Yang characterized as a "political exile" seeking one-quarter of China's territory. "No country in the world should allow 'the Dalai' to pay visits or use its territory to engage in separatist activities," Yang warned. In yet another sign of improving cross-Straits relations, the Taiwan issue did not come up during the press conference. Other issues discussed included the Six-Party Talks and North Korea's impending launch, climate change, Hong Kong and relations with Russia, France, Japan, South Korea, the rest of Asia and Africa. End Summary.

U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS OFF TO A GOOD START

[1](#)2. At the annual Foreign Minister's Press Conference held on the margins of the ongoing National People's Congress, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi on March 7 engaged in a wide-ranging and nearly two-hour long discussion with foreign and domestic media in Beijing's Great Hall of the People. Ties between China and the new Obama administration have "gotten off to a good start," Yang said, noting that under the current circumstances, there is an "even greater range of common interests" between China and the United States. China hopes both sides will pay attention to each other's "core interests" and further strengthen exchanges, coordination and cooperation. Yang expressed optimism that U.S.-China ties will continue to develop along a sound and stable track.

[1](#)3. Noting his impending visit to Washington, FM Yang said the purpose of his trip is to make necessary preparations for the meeting between President Hu and President Obama in London and to work with the U.S. side to make concrete plans for U.S.-China relations this year. Asked about opposition in China to the purchase of U.S. debt instruments, Yang said China uses its foreign exchange assets in accordance with the principles of security, liquidity and appreciation and will continue to do so.

FINANCIAL CRISIS

[1](#)4. In response to a question whether the United States was to "blame" for the global financial crisis, Yang responded that "people

have their own fair judgment regarding the causes" and that "lessons should be learned." The "most urgent task" however, is to prepare well for the upcoming G-20 summit in London to strengthen coordination between different countries' macroeconomic policies, to stabilize financial markets and reform financial systems. China is willing to work with the United States and other countries in the world to face the financial crisis. China's biggest contribution to dealing with the financial crisis is the maintenance of "steady and rapid economic development." Yang also noted that China remains committed to assisting developing countries and to concluding foreign business deals and is an active participant in the G-20 process.

DALAI LAMA A "POLITICAL EXILE"

15. Yang responded defensively to a reporter's question on why China cancelled the December EU-China summit over French President Sarkozy's meeting with the Dalai Lama, and whether future cooperation would be affected if EU leaders "have tea" with religious leaders. It was not China's fault that the summit "had to be postponed," Yang asserted. Yang alleged that the Dalai Lama plans to build a "Greater Tibet" on one-quarter of Chinese territory, "get rid of" the Chinese military and "drive out other ethnic groups." How can such a person be a "religious figure," Yang asked rhetorically. The Dalai Lama is "by no means simply a religious figure" Yang declared, but rather is simply a "political exile." China's "contradiction" with the Dalai Lama is not over religion, human rights, ethnicity or culture but over the preservation of China's unity and whether Tibet should be separated from China's territory, Yang claimed.

16. The Foreign Minister warned that no country in the world should allow "the Dalai" to pay visits or use its territory to engage in "separatist activities." Yang claimed that countries should refrain from doing so not as a "special favor" to China, but rather in keeping with the "norms of international relations." China hopes other countries will respect these norms, international law, China's Constitution and PRC law regarding the autonomy of ethnic regions. Plans were moving forward for a China-EU summit in Prague in the next few months, Yang said, noting that Premier Wen Jiabao was involved with setting up that summit meeting.

DIPLOMACY: AS EASY AS 1-2-3-4

17. Yang gave a lengthy discourse on China's diplomatic work plan for 2009. First, the overall objective of China's diplomacy is to serve the goal of ensuring steady and rapid economic development in China. Second, the two main priorities for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are to "vigorously" deal with the financial crisis and help prepare Chinese leaders for participation in important multilateral conferences. These would include the G-20, the "G-8-plus-5" in Italy in July, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit and the November APEC leaders' meeting. Third, China must make advances on three fronts: security diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and strengthening consular protection for Chinese citizens overseas. Fourth, China's diplomacy will work on four areas: relations with major countries, relations with neighboring countries, enhancing solidarity and cooperation with developing nations and playing an "even more active" role in settling global and regional "hot-spot issues."

CHINA'S GROWING STATUS

18. Echoing Premier Wen Jiabao's March 5 Government Work Report, (ref C) Yang remarked that China's international standing, role and influence have "visibly upgraded" over the past year. China has made "important contributions to world and regional peace, stability and development." Partly as a result of hosting the Olympics and Paralympics and the Asia-Europe Meeting Summit, over 180 foreign heads of state, heads of government and other political leaders came to China in 2008, which was "unprecedented." Asked whether the global financial crisis was shifting the global balance of power in China's favor, Yang replied that the "rational and legitimate demands of the people" had won the upper hand and therefore governments should put the people's interests first to achieve

"justice and equality for the world."

SIX-PARTY TALKS, NORTH KOREA'S IMPENDING LAUNCH

¶9. Important progress has been made in the Six-Party Talks, and that progress should be "cherished," FM Yang said. Acknowledging the existence of "some difficulties," Yang said such problems are "normal" when dealing with "such a complicated issue." It is important for all parties to act in accordance with the September 2005 agreement, to complete the second-phase actions and enable the talks to enter the third phase. As the host of the Six-Party talks, China will continue to make its own "unique" efforts to move the talks forward. China has taken note of the DPRK's announcement that it will launch an "experimental communications satellite," as well as the reactions by various countries. Yang expressed concern over this situation, commenting that maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula is in line with various parties' interests and stating his hope that "relevant parties" would act toward that goal.

CLIMATE CHANGE

¶10. The Copenhagen Conference on climate change conference in December 2009 will be "very important," FM Yang said in response to a question about the growing role of climate change issues in foreign relations. China hopes relevant countries will work together to pursue the "Bali Roadmap" and achieve the goals set forth in Copenhagen. China supports the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities," and both developed and developing countries must each make their own efforts and work together to achieve success at the conference. China will adopt measures according to its national plan on tackling climate change, fulfill its promises and make contributions toward the success of the Copenhagen conference, Yang stated.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

¶11. Reporters asked about China's relations with Russia, France, Japan, South Korea, Southeast Asia and Africa:

--Russia: FM Yang stressed the progress in relations in the 13 years since Russia and China established a "strategic partnership." Yang highlighted the need to deepen energy cooperation, noting that the recent agreement to ensure a "long-term oil supply" through a pipeline deal was a "win-win result."

--France: China has always attached great importance to Sino-French relations and does not bear responsibility for the current problems. Yang expressed confidence in the long-term development of the relationship but expressed hope that the French side will "positively and actively respond to the major concerns of the Chinese side."

--Japan: The "poisoned dumpling" incident was a criminal case, Yang said, noting that there has not yet been a break in the case, for which he asked for "understanding" from the Japanese side. The Tianwaitian gas and oil field was outside the scope of the East China Sea understanding between the two sides, Yang asserted. Yang praised Japan's hosting of a trilateral meeting together with China and South Korea, noting that the three countries should strengthen exchanges and cooperation in the face of the global financial crisis.

--South Korea: There had been "initial discussions" between China and South Korea on the establishment of a free trade zone, Yang said, asserting that it was a "good idea" to start talks "at an early date" on establishing a free trade zone. Yang said China, Japan, and the ROK should become "role models" for "opposing investment and trade protectionism."

-- Other Asian Countries: For the Asian economy to be the first to escape from the "shadow" of the global financial crisis, China and other Asian countries must "be creative and take pioneering steps," Yang said. China will continue to promote "10 [ASEAN]-plus-1" and "10 [ASEAN]-plus-3" cooperation, making the Chiang Mai Initiative

more multilateral, development of the Greater Mekong Subregion and greater cooperation with member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

-- Africa: China does not look down on poor countries, nor is it only interested in oil, Yang stated. "Some countries" do not want Africa to develop its resources, Yang said, preferring instead for Africa to "wait" to reach its full potential. Cooperation between China and Africa is mutually beneficial and win-win. On Darfur, Yang said China's position is to "promote dialogue and peace talks." Beijing hopes to see "continual progress" in both peacekeeping operations and the political talks process in Darfur.

HONG KONG, BUT NO MENTION OF TAIWAN

¶12. Asked by a Hong Kong reporter about the MFA's support for Hong Kong's international activities, Yang said the Ministry "goes all out" to create external conditions for prosperity and stability in Hong Kong. China invited representatives from Hong Kong to participate in the Washington G-20 summit and the upcoming London financial summit. The MFA also encourages international organizations to consider Hong Kong and Macau as venues for international meetings. Hong Kong and Macau officials and compatriots also go overseas to participate in multilateral and international activities and meetings. The MFA has handled 600 Hong Kong-related consular protection cases involving over 2,000 people, Yang added.

¶13. Reflecting the dramatic reduction of tensions between the Mainland and Taiwan over the past year, Yang did not receive a single Taiwan-related question, nor did he work Taiwan into any of his answers to questions posed by reporters.

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